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SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Training Commanders and Staffs in Control of
Troops--The Most Important Part of Operational Training
(From the experience of the Red Banner Transcaucasus Military District)

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Training Commanders and Staffs in Control of Troops--
The Most Important Part of Operational Training
(From the experience of the Red Banner Transcaucasus Military District)
by
Colonel-General S. Kurkotkin

The complexity of control of troops in present-day operations places increased demands on the level of training of generals, officers, and staffs. The main forms of operational training for the command and staffs of formations, which were reviewed in detail in the article of General-Leytenant N. Volodin, * are widely used in the Red Banner Transcaucasus Military District. In the present article we intend to share our experience in conducting army exercises and other exercises for the purpose of improving the skills of commanders and staffs in the control of troops.

The greatest success in training operational staffs in the control of troops can be achieved in training periods conducted in the field, on the terrain. It is there, in a situation that approximates a combat situation, that the teamwork of the operational elements of the command and the staffs is improved and generals and officers acquire the practical skills needed when directing troops during an operation.

It is well known that prior to World War II, district maneuvers constituted the highest form of training for staffs and troops. Army (corps) exercises were also held after the war up to the middle 1950's.

As a result of the increased spatial scope of operations that accompanied the introduction of missile/nuclear weapons, not only district maneuvers, but also army exercises with troops, became a rare exception in the practice of operational training, i.e., they had almost outlived their usefulness as the highest form of training for troops, command personnel, and staffs. For the exact same reasons, large-scale tactical exercises with field firing were conducted only intermittently. Nevertheless, it is no secret that these exercises constitute the highest form of field training for troops and staffs during peacetime. In them, the problems involved in coordinating the different arms of troops--infantry and tanks with artillery, large units and units of ground troops with aviation--can be worked out with the greatest thoroughness. All conventionalities are eliminated from the control of troops, the morale and psychological

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", 1970, No 1 (89).

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preparedness of the troops is raised, and the faith of soldiers in their weapons is strengthened.

Dialectical unity, in which are found all the constituent parts of military art--strategy, operational art, and tactics--requires uniformity of operational and tactical training for formation commanders (commanders), staffs, and troops. District maneuvers have satisfied this requirement to the greatest possible extent: against the background of a single situation and within a given area and time, all personnel--from the commander of the troops of the district to the private--received training.

From this arises the quite natural question: will we once more return to the practice of conducting district maneuvers? We believe not. The large spatial scope of modern operations, including those conducted using conventional means of destruction, and the limited capabilities for troop deployment under peacetime conditions (only on ranges and training grounds) seriously complicate the successful conduct of maneuvers. Moreover, they entail large expenditures of materiel, which cannot always be justified by the results obtained. All the above factors, on the whole, do not eliminate maneuvers as the highest form of operational and combat training, but make their conduct not always feasible.

Consequently, it is not by chance that in recent years we have observed in the practice of operational training the combining of operational and operational-strategic command-staff exercises with tactical, tactical-specialist, aviation, rear, and other exercises of large units and units of arms of troops and branches of the armed forces. Such exercises, conducted against the background of a single situation within a specific area and time period, make it possible to test the combat readiness of the control organs of all levels, to realistically approach the problems of the organization and conduct of combat operations, and in general to improve the field training of staffs and troops.

This form of operational training is widely employed in the Red Banner Transcaucasus Military District, where in 1969, along with front command-staff exercises and several operational-specialist exercises, there were held a number of army command-staff exercises combined with divisional tactical exercises and also with tactical-specialist exercises of army and district units. The divisional tactical exercises were conducted with field firing, launchings of missiles, and bombing by aircraft. The experience we accumulated enables us to impart several ideas on the organization of and methods of conducting such exercises and on improvement of the control of troops.

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The following can be called upon to participate in each army exercise: the headquarters of the army; one division; the staffs of 2 to 3 divisions with the staffs of the regiments; the staffs or operations groups of the staffs of the missile, antiaircraft missile, and other units of the army; air units of the air army; and district units of special troops. Exercises provided for in the organizational instructions relating to the combat training of the ground troops and the air forces are conducted with the participating large units and units.

When working out the themes and concepts of army exercises, the operational and combat assignments of the large units and units should be taken into consideration. In connection with this, it is desirable to select areas for their actions that are similar in character to the areas in the territory of our probable enemy, and to form an enemy grouping similar to the one with which the army will have to clash in the initial operation. This approach permits the command and the staffs at all levels to deepen their knowledge of the probable enemy and to study the capabilities and methods of actions of their troops for routing him.

In general, the themes of the army exercises should be complex, and should include training problems that embrace all types of combat actions. Thus, in one of the army exercises the theme selected and its concept provided for: checking the combat readiness of the participating troops and staffs with an alert and movement out into alternate and unplanned areas of concentration; the conduct of mobilization measures; the working out of the problems involved in preparing for an offensive operation and in conducting it both with the use of conventional means of destruction and with the use of nuclear weapons; and also the transition to the defensive in order to repel a counterattack by large enemy forces. The following were worked out with a division that was called upon to participate in a tactical exercise with field firing: the organization and conduct of an offensive from the march against a defending enemy; the maneuvering of forces and means for the purpose of destroying enemy reserves; the repelling of counterattacks; the breakthrough of an intermediate line at night; the delivery of a salvo nuclear strike and the elimination of the aftereffects of enemy nuclear strikes; the forced crossing of a canyon or mountain river using heliborne tactical airborne assault landing; the development of an offensive with limited forces and the transition to the defense.

It is advisable to work out the training tasks of an exercise in three to four stages. Under conditions when the overall length of an army exercise reaches 7 to 8 days, while the division command-staff training exercises are ordinarily allotted no more than 3 to 4 days, the latter are conducted only during some of the stages of the army exercise. When

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choosing the time and place for bringing in any given division for participation in the army exercise, the deployment conditions, the sites of the training grounds, and the potential expenditure of mileage remaining to the next routine overhaul and of other material resources are taken into consideration. The theme of the division tactical exercise, which constitutes the most important stage and the most complex part of the army exercise, plays the deciding role in this. It is our experience that during the first stage of an army exercise it is advisable to work out the bringing of the troops to combat readiness, during the second stage--the planning of the operation and of the combat actions, and during the third stage--control of troops while the operation is in progress. During the second stage a division called upon to participate in the exercise can work out the combined movement or shipment by rail to the departure area, occasionally based on a situation unrelated to the overall concept. Its tactical exercise in this case will be the concluding stage.

The instructiveness of any exercise to a large extent depends on the level of training of the directing body. This is also true of an army exercise, which is conducted by the commander of the troops of a district, with the participation of generals and officers of directorates of the district and occasionally of generals and officers from other armies in the capacity of umpires. The tendency to reduce to a reasonable minimum the number of generals and officers called upon to provide the directing body of an exercise and to act as umpires is well known. In our opinion, this tendency has a firm foundation, underlying which is the training principle--let each chief train his immediate subordinate. This means that, for example, the commander of the troops of the district or his deputies can train the army commander, and the army commander and his deputies can train the division commander. Let us examine as one of the variants a diagram of the organization of the directing body of an army training exercise drawn from our experience. We note that all the umpires, except for the firing umpires, are generals and officers from directorates of the district and that they are reduced in number in comparison with the recommendations of the Manual on the Organization and Conduct of Exercises of the Ground Forces. On the whole, this did not affect the quality of the conduct of army exercises and other exercises.

The reduction in the number of umpires must be compensated for by an improvement in the quality of their training.

The basic method of training formation commanders and staffs in an exercise consists of having them work independently, in conformity with the developing situation, and to have the director or their immediate chief periodically listen to their reports on the situation, decisions, and orders.

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It should be emphasized that lately the work methods of the director have been constantly increasing in their similarity to the work methods of formation commanders with their subordinates during World War II while preparing for and during the course of operations. In view of this, without lowering the quality of training, we endeavor to avoid the organization of lengthy reporting sessions involving all chiefs before a large audience. Now, the director, as a rule, either in the working areas of the participants in the exercise or with the aid of technical means of communication, listens to the trainees and clarifies and improves their knowledge and skills pertaining to: the evaluation of and reporting on the situation; the formulating of decisions; the planning of operations and combat actions; the assignment of tasks; and other matters. During the course of this work the formation commanders and other chiefs should cultivate self-reliance and decisiveness in their judgments and actions.

With such a method of work of the director, pauses in the course of an exercise are eliminated. However, this does not mean that one should altogether abandon the practice of the appropriate chiefs listening to reports in the presence of all or a majority of the participants of the exercise. Extremes in this question, as in any matter, may not always be beneficial. We do not rule out that during preparations for an operation and in a number of other cases, especially during war games, for the acquisition of comprehensive operational knowledge by the district (army) leadership personnel, it will be advisable for the director to listen to the reports of the commanders and chiefs on a specific situation in the presence of the other participants of the exercise (game).

The control of field firings, launchings of missiles, and bombing should be assigned an important place in army exercises. As our experience demonstrates, it should be based on a well-organized and reliably working liaison between the posts of the directing body and the commanders of the units and subunits. In the interest of ensuring safety, only the director can authorize the conduct of artillery (mortar) firings, assault actions, and bombing by aircraft.

The time factor always has played a large role in the control of troops, and in present-day operations its importance continues to increase. The striving to preempt the enemy in carrying out various measures and in actions should permeate the entire operational training of our command personnel. It is precisely here, in operational and combat training measures (during various exercises), that we must search for and work out methods and ways of reducing the amount of time needed to accomplish various tasks.

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Let us examine a problem such as the working out (adoption) of the decision for an operation and transmitting the tasks to the troops. The side that achieves superiority over the enemy in the time required for carrying out these measures, under otherwise equal conditions, is justified in counting on success. Consequently the methods of adopting the decision and transmitting tasks to the troops are constantly being improved. In our district a work schedule for adopting the decision and transmitting tasks to the troops within short time limits has been developed and is being put into practice. Operational games and exercises that have been conducted demonstrate that such a work schedule is practicable for the first front operations, for which preparation is carried out still in peacetime, and for which alterations and refinements of tasks introduced on the eve of war are not basic and do not essentially change the plan.

The schedule provides the following work method for the formation commander and staff to use when working out the decision and assigning tasks for the operation. After receiving the operational directive of the Supreme High Command, the commander of the troops of the front, together with the Member of the Military Council, the chief of staff, the chiefs of the operations and intelligence directorates, the chief of rocket troops and artillery, and the commander of the air army, study it, clarify the task, evaluate the situation, and refine the concept of the operation and the tasks of the troops. This work takes 1.5 to 2 hours. Here, in a suitably equipped working area of the commander, the officers of the operations directorate mark the task of the front, the concept of the operation, and the tasks of the troops on three charts. When necessary, while this work is in progress, the operations directorate sends the commanders of formations (commanders of large units) a preliminary order.

We note that the most labor-consuming part of working out the decision is the determination of the procedure for delivering the first front nuclear strike. The limited capabilities for reconnaissance prior to the beginning of combat actions do not permit determining with the necessary specificity the targets (except for stationary targets), the coordinates of bursts, and the yield of the nuclear warheads being used. Consequently, it appears to us that no effort should be made to designate the coordinates of the bursts for each target (except for stationary targets) in the decision for the first nuclear strike, which is made prior to the beginning of combat actions. Obviously, for the majority of targets it is sufficient to determine the overall quantity and yield of nuclear warheads and the number of executors.

Within 1.5 to 2 hours after receiving the operational directive of the Supreme High Command, the commander of the front and the chief of the operations directorate assign the armies their tasks by telephone (high

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frequency-VCh, secure communications device-ZAS) and the chief of staff of the front briefs those chiefs of arms of troops and of services of the front who did not participate in working out the decision. From then on the operational planning work performed simultaneously by the front and army directorates becomes specific in nature.

Analogous work methods for adopting the decision and setting the tasks are used in the armies, divisions, and units. They make it possible for tasks to be transmitted to all elements within eight hours, and as a result the different echelons have available the following amount of time: a front--five hours, an army--four hours, and a division (regiment)--three hours. The transmission of tasks within the amount of time indicated in the schedule presupposes the availability of secure communications channels from the front to the regiment and the extensive use of formalized documents at all levels.

However, preparation for an operation does not come to an end with the transmission of tasks to the executors. Additional time, the amount of which will depend on the specific situation, may be required to work out planning documents, to organize cooperation, and to effectively prepare the troops for combat actions and monitor their readiness. However, on the whole, the correct tendency of reducing the amount of time for preparing for combat actions should not exceed reasonable limits, i.e., it should not have a negative effect on the quality of the preparation. Exercises with troops offer instructive examples which should be taken into consideration when the amount of time necessary to organize combat actions is being determined. In a number of tactical exercises with field firing, a considerable amount of time (up to 24 hours) was allotted to the organization of the offensive against a defending enemy with the movement forward of a division out of the waiting area. And it should be noted that commanders and staffs using unfamiliar training grounds did not always succeed in efficiently organizing the forward movement of troops, coordination, and control even when such an amount of time was available.

Exceptional efficiency is required in the work of formation commanders and staffs during the control of troops in an operation characterized by swift and abrupt changes in the situation. For this reason, during operational exercises a persistent search for methods of speeding up the collection and processing of data concerning the situation, the adoption of decisions, and the transmission of tasks to the troops should be and will be conducted. Experience shows that with the existing communications facilities and work methods of the staffs, a great deal of time is spent in collecting, processing and reporting data concerning the situation: up to 2 to 3 hours in a front, up to 1.5 to 2 hours in an army, and up to 1 hour in a division. Thus, during a special exercise the intelligence

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directorates of the front spent up to 1.5 to 2 hours collecting and consolidating data on the enemy obtained by radio and radiotechnical reconnaissance, up to 1.5 hours for data obtained by special reconnaissance, and up to 1 hour for data obtained by aerial reconnaissance. Clearly, to arrive at decisions on the delivery of nuclear strikes during mobile combat actions on the basis of such delayed data is extremely risky.

Possible ways of reducing the amount of time spent collecting and processing reconnaissance data are: to improve the equipping with means of communications and the quality of the training of reconnaissance organs; to eliminate the multiplicity of levels in the passage of information; to simultaneously transmit data obtained to several levels (for example, from the division to the army and to the front, from reconnaissance aircraft to all concerned staffs, etc.); to mechanize the processes of coding and decoding; to determine precisely the volume, content, and urgency of transmission of information.

It is known from World War II experience that the staffs endeavored to collect data on the situation in great detail. The different components of the operational structure and of the combat formations of the troops were carefully plotted on maps, analyzed, and evaluated in order to adopt a decision. However, when there was a swiftly changing situation and combat actions became mobile in nature, despite their determination, the staffs did not always succeed in obtaining comprehensive data on the situation.

During modern operations, especially those conducted with the use of missile/nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction, it is hardly advisable to require the staffs to engage in the collection of data on the situation in as great detail as was done during the last war. The main task of the staff is to obtain the most essential information and to report it on a timely basis to enable the formation commander to swiftly react to the development of events and adopt the necessary decision.

Each staff should work out a list of such data and train the appropriate generals and officers in their swift transmission (reception) with the use of various technical means of communications. The following data, for example, will always be of interest to the front commander: enemy preparations to use nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction; the position of enemy targets for our planned nuclear strikes; the status of the rocket brigades and the aviation units that are to participate in the delivery of the first nuclear strike, the status of each division (in general), and of the control organs of the armies; and the decisions of formation commanders during an abrupt change in the situation. With the transition to nuclear actions, first of all, the status of troops that have been subjected to strikes and the measures being undertaken to

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Undertaken to restore their combat effectiveness are ascertained. Periodically the commander of the front requires more complete information on the situation, and the precedence of its arrival is determined by tables of priority reports.

It is our opinion that to increase the speed of the collection of data on the situation, duplication should be eliminated or reduced to a minimum, i.e., the list of data to be obtained from the troops by the various organs should be strictly delimited. By way of illustration, current and particularly high-priority information should be obtained from the troops by a directorate of the front as follows: on the enemy--only by the intelligence directorate; on the position and status of the combined-arms large units and the command posts of the army--by the operations directorate; on the rocket troops--by the staff of the rocket troops and artillery, etc. The chiefs of the above directorates report this information to the chief of staff and to the commander of the troops of the front. In doing so, they bear in mind that the commander of the troops and the chief of staff of the front can also hear reports on the situation directly from the army.

The proposed automation of the collection of information and its visual presentation in the working area of the commander will necessitate a different approach to the organization of the work of staffs in accomplishing this task and a review of the very organizational structure of the control organs.

The necessity of swiftly reacting to changes in the situation, when the amount of time for adopting decisions and transmitting to the troops tasks such as the delivery of nuclear strikes, is calculated not in hours but in minutes, and requires locating a certain portion of the generals and officers close together at control posts. During the course of operational exercises, a tendency has been observed of locating the formation commander together with a group of generals and officers with whose aid rapid adoption of decisions and transmission of tasks to the troops is achieved. We have named this part of the control organ at the front command post "the control center of the commander of the troops of the front". It includes the chief of staff, the chiefs of the operations and intelligence directorates, the chief of rocket troops and artillery, and the commander of the air army, with small groups of officers. The control center is equipped with all types of communications, making it possible to carry out control of the troops either directly from the working area of the commander or from the working areas of the other chiefs.

The survivability of the command posts, and, first and foremost, of the control centers, is of great importance for the stability of the

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control of the troops. It seems to us that this problem cannot be solved by setting up the control center of the commander of the troops of the front in motor vehicles, even if they are armored.

During the preparation of an operation and at the beginning of it, the control center of the commander of the troops of the front is located at a protected command post. In the course of the operation, during redeployment within our own territory, a protected command post of one of the armies or of a fortified area (where they exist), and also installations erected by the engineer troops, using prefabricated and standard structural components, can be used.

Calculations show that an engineer battalion preparing control posts is capable of building such an installation within 36 to 48 hours, and it can protect personnel against destruction by nuclear warheads of medium yield, if ground zero is no closer than 500 meters. If there are three sets of the above-mentioned structural components available, the problem of building relatively protected installations for a control center can be successfully solved.

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Of course, they cannot ensure the survivability of a control center against bursts of nuclear weapons of high yield, and especially of megaton yield, which will quite probably be used against the front command posts. In connection with this, during the course of operational training in the last three to four years, the capabilities for transferring control of the troops of the front from one post to another were studied. The experience of exercises shows that the forward command post of the front and the command post of the army are not capable of fully accomplishing the task of controlling the troops of the front, especially the control of reconnaissance, the rocket troops, and the air defense troops of the front, since they have poor organs and means of control. As regards the rear area post, its limited capabilities prevent us from seriously considering the question of transferring control of the troops of the front to it.

Consequently, in addition to continuing to search for methods of achieving stable control of the troops by increasing the survivability of the control posts and by transferring control from one post to another, we should investigate the possibilities of setting up two equivalent command posts in the operational formations--a main command post and an alternate command post. (One of them functions and the other is in reserve.)

Here there are two paths that can be pursued: the first is to have a definite increase in the number of personnel of the headquarters of the front and army, and the second is to improve the work methods of the organs of control, to reorganize them somewhat (without increasing the number of

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personnel authorized), and to improve the quality of the training of the generals and officers of the operational staffs. We believe the latter path to be more sound.

Setting up control centers is the first step in the solution of the given problem. Since in the control center the work of the generals and officers is organized by shifts and not by axes, the opportunity exists for eliminating parallelism in the collection of data on the situation from the troops, for decreasing the volume and quantity of working documents, especially maps, and for speeding up the processes of adopting decisions and transmitting tasks to the executors.

To ensure the continuity and stability of the control of troops at the present time requires higher and more comprehensive operational and staff training of the generals and officers of the leading directorates (departments) of the district and the armies. However, each year fewer officers who have graduated from the Military Academy of the General Staff come to serve in the districts. Even in the leading directorates of our district they are few in number, and a considerable number of the officers do not have any academy education at all. Evidently, the time has come to review carefully and thoroughly the question of improving the centralized system of training personnel earmarked for carrying out the control of troops at the front and army levels.

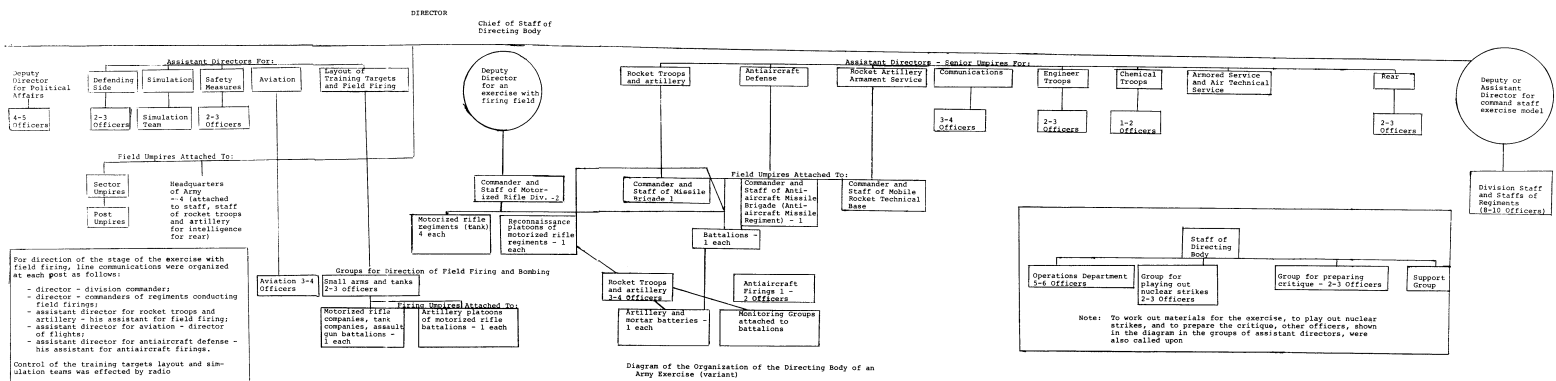
(Charts 1 and 2 on following pages)

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Chart 1

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SCHEDULE
WORK IN ADOPTING THE DECISION FOR THE OPERATION (COMMAND ACTIONS) AND TRANSMITTING TASKS TO THE TROOPS WITHIN SHORT TIME LIMITS

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Total time, in hours	Designation of the work	Executors	Time from the moment of receipt of the directive of the Supreme High Command in hours						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Front -- 5	1. Study of directive of Supreme High Command. Adopting the decision 2. Issuing of preliminary orders (when necessary) 3. Briefing chiefs of arms of troops and of services 4. Assignment of tasks to armies by telephone (high-frequency VCh, secure communications device -ZAS) 5. Transmittal of operational directives to armies 6. Assignment of tasks to large units (units) of arms of troops and of special troops 7. Transmittal of orders to the armies for support of the operation	Front Commander, Member of Military Council, chief of staff, chief of operations directorate, chief of intelligence directorate, chief of rocket troops and artillery, commander of air army Directorates (services) Chief of staff Front commander, chief of operations directorate Operations directorate Chiefs of arms of troops and of special troops Directorates (services)							
Army -- 4 (5)*	1. Study of the task, adopting the decision for operation 2. Transmittal of preliminary orders (when necessary) 3. Briefing chiefs of arms of troops and of services departments 4. Assignment of tasks to divisions by telephone (secure communications device) 5. Transmittal of tasks to divisions (army units) by combat orders 6. Transmittal of orders for support of the operation	Army commander, Member of Military Council, chief of staff, chief of operations department, chief of intelligence department, chief of rocket troops and artillery Departments (services) Chief of staff Army commander, chief of operations department Operations department, chief of arms of troops (services) Operations department, chief of arms of troops (services)							
Division -- 3 (4,5)*	1. Study of the task and adopting the decision 2. Issuing of preliminary orders 3. Briefing chiefs of sections and services 4. Briefing commanders of units (or issuing an oral combat order when division is in a compact deployment) 5. Transmittal of tasks to units by combat orders	Division commander, chief of staff, chief of operations section, chief of rocket troops and artillery Sections (services) Chief of staff Division commander, chief of operations section Operations section, chiefs of arms of troops (sections)							
Regiment -- 3 (5)*	1. Study of the task, adopting the decision 2. Issuing of preliminary orders 3. Issuing an oral combat order 4. Transmittal of tasks in subunits	Commander, chief of staff Staff of regiment Regiment commander Subunit commanders							

Chart 2

-- Work pursuant to preliminary orders.
-- Work following receipt of the task.
* In parentheses -- time of work pursuant to preliminary orders.